

Agiografia e culto dei Sette Dormienti. Storicità e processi di mitologizzazione dell'agiostoria efesina nel Mediterraneo [Agiography and cult of the Seven Sleepers. Historicity and mythologization processes of the Ephesian agiographic tale in the Mediterranean], preface by Bartolomeo Pirone, afterword by Giancarlo Rinaldi, Bologna, Edizioni del Gruppo di Ricerca Arabo-Cristiana (Edizioni Patrimonio Culturale Arabo Cristiano vol. 30 / studi), 2023, 246 pp. ISBN: 9791280091154.

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This monograph, authored by the Italian cultural and social anthropologist Anna Tozzi di Marco, deals with the historicity and the mythologising processes of the legend of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus. The historical and cultural context is the medieval space of the ancient Levant, the Near East, and the Mediterranean Region. The monograph represents a contribution to interdisciplinarity ranging from the religious studies to the history, hagiology, archaeology and art history. It is the first volume of a 2 books project where the second one, in the author's words, will be centred on the cultic places of the Seven Sleepers and rituals of devotion in current Christianity and Islam from an ethnographic perspective.

The nine chapters with three appendices of the text are preceded by a foreword by the current GRAC president, Prof. Bartolomeo Pirone, and followed by the afterword of Prof. Giancarlo Rinaldi, historian of the Christianity at the University of Naples, L'Orientale. In the first chapter, the reader is introduced to the historical and cultural context of the city of Ephesus, where the legend originated, as well as the surrounding region.

The second chapter deals with the Ephesian religious milieu going back to the pagan context. In the third chapter the author gives an account of the historical facts and the context related to the birth of the Ephesian legend, analysing not only the written sources but also the archaeological evidences, the epigraphic and the iconographic documents. In the fourth chapter she reconstructs the creation of the Seven Sleepers' myth and its hagiographic construction. The fifth chapter deals with various similar past stories from ancient Greece, Sardinia, and Hellenistic Judaism which may have influenced the legend of the Seven Sleepers. In the subsequent chapters Anna Tozzi di Marco focuses on the Christian hagiography, including the Christian Arabic texts. She gives an account of the spread of the legend in

the Latin West and in the Eastern provinces of Roman Empire. In particular, the sixth chapter begins with the translation attributed to Gregory of Tours (6th c.), then it examines the versions of Paulus Diaconus (8th c.), Photius (9th c.), and James de Voragine (13th c.).

The seventh chapter concerns the legend preserved in Coptic, Syriac and Armenian literatures, underlining their differences. In the eighth chapter the author faces the versions of the legend in Arab Christianity and those of Ethiopian milieu. The ninth chapter copes with the transmission of the legend from the Christian Syriac and Arabic renderings to the Arabic Muslim story of the Companions of the cave (*Ashab al-kahf*), which is told in the holy book of Koran. The following three appendices are important contributions to the state of the art in the studies about the Seven Sleepers legend: the first appendix concerns with the pictorial and sculptural evidences of the subject in Italy; the second one traces the itinerary of the legend in literature (fiction, poetry), theatre and music; in the third appendix the author, the Italian musicologist Fabrizio Florian, deals with Carl Loewe's work, analysing his oratorio *Die sieben Schläfer*.

Finally the monograph is enriched with a number of photographs and is supplemented by a bibliography and a name index.